

WTO Launches New Trade Talks— With the Emphasis on Agriculture

Last November, members of the World Trade Organization (WTO), meeting in Doha, Qatar, took decisive steps toward promoting global economic growth, recovery and development by agreeing on an agenda to negotiate further trade liberalization. Working from a single draft text hammered out over months of discussions among member countries, a consensus was reached on many diverse issues.

Agriculture will be central in discussions during the new talks, so *AgExporter* is presenting excerpts from statements by USDA Secretary Ann M. Veneman and U.S. Trade Representative Robert B. Zoellick on the negotiations and their importance to America and its farmers.

In remarks at the Farm Journal Forum on Nov. 28, 2001, Secretary Veneman said:

“We’ve just launched historic new trade negotiations, and agriculture is at the heart of the discussions.

“We went into the negotiations in Doha saying we would aggressively seek

language that would tear down the walls that other countries have built that hurt our farmers—particularly the large export subsidies of the European Union.

“We came home with a victory—a framework that sets a positive stage for future negotiations. The Doha Declaration sets the stage for helping to expand and revitalize the global economy. It also sends a powerful signal that the world’s trading nations support peaceful and open exchange, and reject the forces of fear and protectionism.

“We now have a clear and ambitious direction to move forward on agricultural



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—Ann M. Veneman,
U.S. Secretary of Agriculture

trade reform: to substantially reduce tariffs and increase market access, to work toward eliminating export subsidies and to reduce trade-distorting domestic supports.

"Removing trade barriers around the world is fundamental to keeping the United States on the path of prosperity and long-term economic growth for the food and agriculture sector. The increased reliance on foreign markets means that we must pay greater attention to the compatibility of domestic farm programs and our international undertakings and activities.

"Without export markets, farm and ranch income would be significantly lower today. And so would asset values.

"All evidence points to developing and middle-income countries as the main source of future growth in food demand, especially the newly emerging middle class in many of these countries.

"To capitalize on these opportunities, we need to diversify well beyond the current pattern of export concentration, where over 60 percent of U.S. agricultural exports go to eight country markets.

"Reaching the burgeoning middle class in developing and middle-income countries will be key to expanding U.S. agricultural exports.

"Increased openness and participation in trade will boost economic growth and development for both developed and developing countries, and demonstrate that economic growth and increased trade are inextricably linked."

In a Nov. 14, 2001, statement in Doha, Ambassador Zoellick said:

"This is an important moment because we've brought together countries from all over the globe with a very strong statement on trade and growth and development. The time that it took us to complete these talks

is a reminder that opening markets is never easy.

"We've reached an agreement that affirms the commitment of WTO members to work cooperatively to reduce the world's trade barriers. This signal of forward progress on trade gives an endorsement and very timely boost to the multilateral trading system. This is only a beginning of course, and over the next few years we will



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certainly face more tests as we engage in negotiations. But I'm optimistic that what we've achieved in Doha lays the ground work for a trade liberalization agenda that will be a starting point for greater development, growth, opportunity and openness around the world.

"Launching the negotiations with this declaration is a landmark achievement for U.S. agriculture. Our team really delivered for America's farmers and ranchers.

"We've settled on a program that lays out ambitious objectives for future negotiations on the liberalization of the agriculture market. These objectives represent a cornerstone of our market access priorities for trade, and they will create a frame-

work that will help the United States and others to advance a fundamental agricultural reform agenda.

"Our work here can mark a new era in economic cooperation between developing and developed nations. On a range of issues, such as agricultural liberalization and reduction of tariffs on non-agricultural goods, we've shown how our interests can converge with the developing world. I believe that we in the United States have an enhanced appreciation for the interests of developing nations in trade. And in turn many of the developing nations with which we cooperated have demonstrated their recognition of our shared interests.

"In the area of rules, the text provides for a two-phase process of negotiations to clarify and improve the disciplines under the agreements on anti-dumping and countervailing measures, and on trade-distorting practices that give rise to dumping and countervailing duties.

"The text notes that the negotiations should preserve the effectiveness of the agreements and the instruments that we apply, thus recognizing that these instruments are legitimate means to counter unfair trade practices and should not be undermined. We also are taking important steps to improve the transparency of the WTO." ■

For the complete remarks of Secretary Veneman at the Farm Journal Forum, go to:
www.usda.gov/news/releases/2001/11/0240.htm

USDA Press Release No. 0240.01

For the full text of Ambassador Zoellick's statement from Doha, go to:

www.ustr.gov/releases/2001/11/01-100.htm

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